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**St. David Man Convicted on Federal Drug Trafficking,
Money Laundering, Structuring, and Social Security Fraud Charges**

Bangor, Maine: United States Attorney Paula D. Silsby announced that, following a six-day trial, a jury sitting in Bangor, Maine returned guilty verdicts late Thursday evening on drug trafficking, money laundering, structuring and Social Security Fraud charges against **Michael Pelletier**, 56, formerly of St. David, Maine. **Pelletier** faces a mandatory life term of imprisonment as a result of his conviction. A sentencing date is yet to be set.

The evidence revealed that between 2003 and 2006, at a time when he was receiving Social Security Disability benefits, **Pelletier** and others participated in a conspiracy to import into the United States from Canada and distribute 1,000 kilograms or more of marijuana. The evidence demonstrated that **Pelletier** arranged for delivery of the marijuana from his Canadian sources of supply, and hired smugglers to ferry 60 pounds or more at a time across remote locations of the St. John River. The marijuana would then be distributed in multi-pound quantities to customers throughout Maine. **Pelletier** purchased the marijuana for \$1,000 a pound in Canada and sold it in the United States for between \$2,200 and \$2,800 a pound.

The evidence also showed that **Pelletier** used the proceeds from his marijuana trafficking business to purchase real estate, vehicles, farm equipment, horses, and all-terrain vehicles. His purchase of some of these assets resulted in his convictions for money laundering and structuring. In addition, because even illegal activities constitute "work" as defined by the Social Security laws, and because the evidence revealed that **Pelletier** failed to report his work - namely, his operation of his marijuana distribution business - to the Social Security Administration, he was also convicted of three counts of Social Security fraud.

"This investigation is an example of ICE's continued commitment to target criminals who exploit our borders and our financial systems," said Bruce M. Foucart, Special Agent-in-Charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Office of Investigations in Boston. "With this conviction, ICE has removed a source of illegal drugs who was responsible for laundering

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illegally derived assets into the Maine economy. ICE will continue to follow the money trail in narcotics investigations and take back proceeds and assets gained by illicit activity.”

Jeff Paula, Special Agent-in-Charge, Boston Field Division, said, “The Office of Investigations is proud to be associated with its fellow law enforcement agencies involved with the investigation and prosecution of Pelletier. The Office of the Inspector General will continue to meet its goal of investigating fraud, waste, and abuse involving programs administered by the Social Security Administration.”

United States Attorney Silsby praised not only the investigation conducted by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency, and the Office of the Inspector General-Social Security Administration, but also the assistance provided by those agencies in bringing the trial to a successful end. United States Attorney Silsby also recognized the contributions of the Maine State Police, the Aroostook County Sheriff’s Office, and Madawaska Maine Police Department.

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